

History of Bay Farm

"The Bay Farm" was the name given to the tract of land purchased in 1702 by Lieutenant Thomas Loring, a financier and shipbuilder from Boston. Several generations of Loring continued to add acres to this original tract through grants and acquisitions. The Bay Farm had a good reputation in Boston, as the Loring were gregarious people; opening their doors for many guests to enjoy their hospitality and beautiful rambling farm overlooking the Bay.

Later, John Parks, a wealthy man, bought the part of the Bay Farm to the west of Park St. Here he built his stately mansion in 1876 in what today is known as the Rectory.

This southern portion of Duxbury became known as Island Creek. Similarly other neighborhoods in Duxbury became known as Tinkertown, The Nook and The Village. The Duxbury, Cohasset and Kingston railroad with as many as 12 trains per day stopped at Island Creek. The trains brought much activity and excitement to town. No one minded living near the tracks then, as the comings and goings were a novelty.

In the late 1920s, Cardinal O'Connell bought the farm from the Parks family to serve as his summer residence. Duxbury, a strictly Protestant community, objected to the news of the Cardinal's purchase and the church's expenditure of Catholic money.

It was Cardinal O'Connell who conceived the seminary idea. Bay Farm was renamed Miramar, meaning "seaview" in Spanish. The Society of the Divine Word then began erecting Building #1 to accommodate 80 boys 13 years and older. The base-

ment contained a huge kitchen staffed with 5 nuns, cafeteria and laundry room. The first and second floors were classrooms, the third floor, a dormitory.

A few years later, Building #2 was erected to provide additional classrooms and administrative offices. At the same time, the once grand summer home was remodeled to accommodate 15 teaching Fathers.

Many town residents recall seeing the seminary boys walking 2 by 2 down Bay Rd. to Hall's Corner to spend their nickel on ice cream. They were not allowed to accept a ride. Perhaps the long walk was part of their humble training.

Finally, in the early 1950s, the gym or Building #3 was built for the boys. The structure was suitably designed to have a church built on top. However, plans changed and the smaller chapel was built next to the covenant.

The idea of pre-seminary training of such young

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boys died by the mid-50s, and Miramar became a retreat for missionaries between assignments. Fathers from all over the world came to enjoy the fresh ocean air, sunny fields, and to meditate in the little Grotto.

Over the decade, retreat activities dwindled and the Society was left with idle buildings. Shortly thereafter, the main buildings were leased to

Massasoit Community College, then Fisher Jr. College as well as community service groups including the Kennedy Center for Handicapped Children and Head Start.

The Society is retaining the 32-acre retreat part of the property located between Park and Loring streets across from Bay Farm. Retreat activities will continue there.